



DHS Matters!

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Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov

DADZ Connection celebrates performance in connecting kids & parents

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DETROIT – Wayne County's DADZ Connection program celebrated success reuniting children with noncustodial parents at a spring program in Detroit. The program was sponsored by DADZ Connection, a Wayne County initiative that seeks to reunite children with noncustodial fathers.

During the program, DADZ Connection and other local officials congratulated Wayne County fathers for their exceptional performance as DADZ program participants. During the ceremony each father received a performance award certificate. The occasion had special meaning with Father's Day only 11 days in the future.

The program featured addresses from Charles Small, executive director of Don Bosco Hall, a

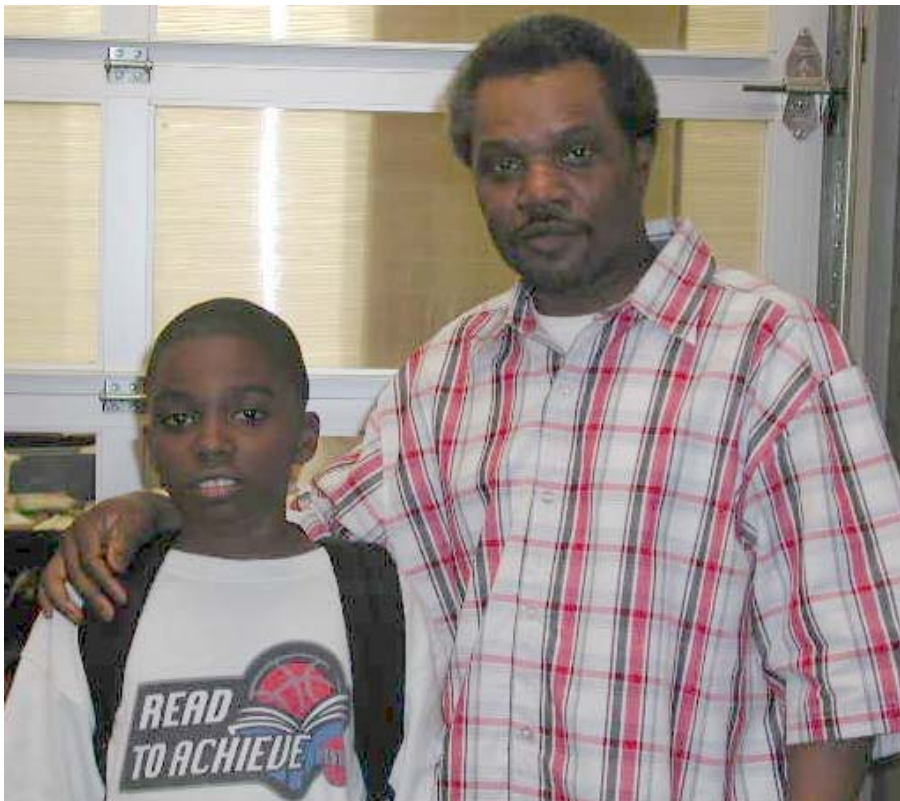
Detroit agency that carries out the initiative, DADZ Connection director Amin Abdus-Sabur and program counselor Abu Hamilton. Wayne County DHS staffers **Bernell Wiggins**, **Albert Ward** and **Laura Martinez** are the management team for the project. Each speaker addressed the innovative nature of the program and how it is succeeding to bring children and fathers together again.

"The dynamics of fatherhood, parenting, divorce, child-rearing and child support are all part of this initiative," said **Bernell Wiggins** of Wayne County DHS. "DADZ Connection is beginning to break down certain barriers and bring children and fathers together. This is what we celebrated June 7."

The DADZ Connection initiative is carried out through Don Bosco Hall on Woodward Ave. in Detroit. It is a collaborative with Wayne County DHS and the Skillman Foundation.

The initiative is intended to strengthen families and involve 500 noncustodial partners, primarily dads, in the lives of their children. The project seeks to reduce the risk factors of out-of-wedlock childbearing, the rate of high school dropout, substance abuse use, and juvenile delinquency for children by keeping noncustodial parents in their lives.

Eligible noncustodial parents receive services such as mentoring to provide support and encouragement; parenting classes to address the dynamics of the parent-child interaction, and other services to strengthen family communication and add to parent-child relationships.



Mark Summers, with son Mark Summers Jr., attended the **DADZ Connection** awards program in Detroit June 7.

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Some of the volunteers at the event (left-right) are **Ida Crum**, **Connie Bennett**, **Charles Cox**, **Minnie Egbuonu** and **Mary Ann Tubbs**.

Back-to-school in Taylor ... because it's cool!

From Sue Tallman, Community Resource Coordinator

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There were clouds and rain outside but the weather couldn't hamper the warm and sunny feeling inside during the Taylor District's second annual back-to-school rally Aug. 24 at our Family Resource Center site – Myers Elementary in Taylor.

There, 31 families with 80 children started the afternoon with a luncheon of pizza and drinks.

After the main course, our participants enjoyed a performance by Basketball Jones, a renowned motivational speaker that combines his message of "I can, I will" with awesome basketball moves during a fast-paced, fun-filled, interactive show.

After the performance everyone made their own ice cream sundae (with a little help with the whipped cream!) and the children received new backpacks filled with all the school supplies necessary to begin a successful school year.

Special thanks go to DHS volunteers that executed the event with precision. DHS volunteers that organized the event include Taylor District manager **John Tarkowski**, secretary **Marty Lawrence**, FIMs **Mary Ann Tubbs** and **Ida Crum**, FIS **Tina Blevins**, **Charles Cox**, and **Liz Furlow**, ES **Minnie Egbuonu**, FRC specialist **Connie Bennett** and **Sue Tallman**. Our spirit of volunteerism, teamwork and humor added the extra element needed to ensure the event was a success.

Parents and children alike were thrilled when receiving the school supplies. With tears in her eyes one parent said, "You don't know what this means to me and my kids."

They wouldn't have these things if it wasn't for you. This makes all the difference in the world to us. Thank you so much, and bless you all."

That day was a special day for all of us.

Monroe County DHS and Salvation Army – helping supply our kids' future

From Polly Carroll, Community Resource Coordinator

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The DHS and Salvation Army worked together in August to help local children start school this year.

The Monroe County DHS, along with the Monroe County Salvation Army, provided agency and other area children with over 500 new backpacks – valued at about \$40 eaach – that were filled with the school supplies the children needed to begin their school year.

During Aug. 27-29 the DHS and Salvation Army volunteers filled the backpacks with the multitude of supplies provided by local area churches, businesses, unions, senior centers, and other agencies, and also by many individual donors.

The children come from families with qualifying incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty standard; they were referred by DHS workers and by the Salvation Army.

Kyle Hudson of the Monroe Salvation Army worked in tandem with our department and volunteers to receive, deliver and distribute the school supplies to qualifying children.

The backpacks were organized by the ages and genders of the children referred. Then “grade appropriate” supplies were put in the backpacks for easy dissemination.

This could not have been accomplished without the hard work of our volunteers.

This is an ongoing project for the Monroe DHS but this was the first year the community has coordinated together to provide, without duplication, more of our area children with the supplies they'll need to return to school.

“It (the backpacks) helps their self-esteem and they'll be happier about going to school because they have new stuff,” Hudson told the Monroe Evening News Aug. 29.

Right: Volunteers (l-r) Madge Mathis, Anne Kachar and Eva Davis helped make the project successful.



Kyle Hudson of Salvation Army and Polly Carroll of Monroe DHS with something for really big kids.



Oakland County hosts Family to Family celebration

From Lynn Contreras, Community Resource Coordinator
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Oakland County DHS organized a celebration July 12 at the Pontiac City Hall auditorium to introduce the Family to Family (F2F) initiative to its county partners.

The event's goal was to provide residents, social service agencies and faith-based partners with the philosophy of F2F, to discuss how each is a key community partner, and to detail how and why each partner can help us keep families together in their neighborhoods.

F2F is a child welfare initiative aimed at improving outcomes for children, particularly those needing out of home placements.

It is a partnership between DHS and the community in which both parties commit to reducing disruption in the lives of at risk children by strengthening resources for serving children within their homes or foster homes right within their communities.

During the program, Oakland County provided data giving insight and support for this initiative to begin in the Pontiac community of Oakland County.

Most importantly, those in attendance were given the key steps on how all of this can be done while keeping children safe in their homes with their immediate or extended family members.

Oakland County DHS director **Margaret Warner** emceed the event and Susan Kelly, consultant for the Study of Social Policy in Washington D.C., was the keynote speaker.

Participants enjoyed a light meal and a question and answer session followed. **Sharon Campbell**, Oakland County's Family to Family coordinator, planned the celebration along with help from steering committee members.



Sharon Campbell, Oakland County's Family to Family coordinator, discusses the program with county partners during a July 12 event in Pontiac. Family to Family is a DHS child welfare initiative aimed at improving outcomes for children, particularly those needing out of home placements.

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1. Ensure your supervisor knows about this and approves.
 2. Have the customer sign **Consent for Publication** form, which is downloadable from the MS Word template -- form **0199.dot**
 3. Send the letter and a copy of the signed consent form to me by e-mail or by fax (517-373-8471).
 4. Include the letter writer's hometown and the job classification(s) of the employee(s) cited in the letter.
- If there are any questions about the letter after that we will contact you. Thank you!

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